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## GREEK AND LATIN

### EQUAL RECOGNITION FOR GREEK WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION

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The influences at work against the study of Greek may be brought under two general classes: those outside of the schools, intensified by the spirit of the times; and those directly due to school legislation and administration. Any effort in the interest of Greek will therefore direct its attention to corrective measures in matters of legislation and administration, and to constructive measures in widening the sphere of Greek influence.

The statistics at hand plainly show that the recent decrease in the number of students who take Greek is chiefly the result of school legislation. Dominated by the idea of quantitative acquisition, our Herbert Spencers attempt to shift the meaning of education from *educare* to *educere*. Boys and girls are pushed on in studies with almost breathless impetuosity. They are mentally old before they have come to youth's estate. Sweet boyhood and girlhood are fairly crushed out of life. The delightful period of a natural school life, the rightful heritage of the boy and the girl, is, or is fast becoming, a mere incident. Life is too short for studies that touch the spirit and quicken the imagination.

If a teacher of Greek have convictions and ideals, a duty now lies before him. He owes his service to education. He may stand for the rightful study of Greek in the shaping of a better education. He cannot be an extremist. This would not be in accord with Greek conceptions of the ideal. Extremists in education, whether for the humanities or for the utilities, as earthquakes in the physical world, may in a wise and far-seeing providence serve as shaking-up forces; they have no place as adjusting and constructive agents. It is reasonable to expect that extremes in curriculum and methods will disappear as the present seeming chaos takes the form of a cosmos. It is toward such an educa-

tional world that one may turn his hopeful gaze, and bend his hopeful endeavor, not as a special pleader for the study of Greek, but with the assurance that in such an educational cosmos Greek will of necessity have equal rank among studies that train and enrich the youthful mind for a life of high ideals and endeavor.

To this end it will be in the interest of Greek to correct the evils of the elective system. In its present form it may fitly be described as education *ad libitum*. The idea of one study leading up to and fitting in with an orderly and consistent development has little recognition in the devotion to this latter-day fetish. Its encouragement to mental dissipation in the college is deplorable; in the secondary schools it is demoralizing. Lines of least resistance are aimlessly followed. The rush for credits claims the right-of-way. In this educational vortex students most in need of the guidance, of the tempering discipline of the schools get through them untouched by their refining fire. Can we appreciate the effect of eight years or more of this credit-seeking style of education upon the moral fiber of the boys and girls who are later to take up the responsibilities of life?

The degree of B.A., the only degree that meant anything in the educational world, has not escaped the ambitious legislator. It was an earned degree, had no honorary fringes, and stood for a definite accomplishment. It had a distinction and standing that was unquestioned. With electives in the schools students coveted what the degree stood for without the willingness to meet its requirements. And now the high-handed attempt is under way actually to steal this degree. The preservation of its integrity is a corrective measure which may be insisted upon fairly in its own right.

The discrimination against Greek in the high schools is not American. It is autocratic. It is a discrimination against one class of tax-paying citizens to the advantage of another. It is at variance with the nation's purpose in education. It marks an attempt to degrade education to commercial and material purposes. Commissioner Draper, of New York, is a sounder and safer expounder of education in America than those who would turn the schools from their educative purpose into charitable

institutions, and to the plane of the workshop and the business school. In his address before the National Educational Association, in 1905, he says:

The educational purpose of the nation reaches forward to the very mountain tops of human learning. . . . It stands for a balanced educational system, . . . in which everyone may find what he will, may go as far and as high as he will, and not for a system which dignifies any interest or aids any class against another.

Any scheme of education that bends its energies to turn boys and girls into wage-earners in the quickest possible time, to the neglect of their training in things of the spirit, is unworthy of a free people and is unspeakably dangerous to their institutions. The boys and girls in America, whether poor or rich, must have their aspirations encouraged. Mrs. Browning wrote: "It takes a soul to move a body." The children in the schools are to perfect this soul to be the directive force in life. If poor, they may not stop at the level of the English peasant. They may aspire to higher things. They may wish to study Greek, and no one has the right to deny them this. Is it the people's will that in the great city of the Central West Greek is taught under a proviso sufficiently rigorous to put it under a ban? Is it not time to urge that a study so vitally interwoven with all the highest interests and doings of life—literature, art, the theater, the church—and conceded to be incomparable in training the imaginative, the reasoning, and the observing faculties, should be accorded recognition in the curriculum on equality with other high-school studies? The time is opportune when Mr. Charles Francis Adams<sup>1</sup> emphasizes its importance in education in his impressive confession, and when we are told by medical men and engineers<sup>2</sup> in one of the foremost universities in the land that the modern languages have failed to meet the needs of their students, and in telling words make a plea for the Greek and Latin training.

As a study thus recognized in the curriculum, Greek is to be studied for itself, for the treasures it has to bestow. It is a mistake to study it as a make-shift or chiefly as a mental discipline—a mistake that has worked harm to the proper study of Greek.

<sup>1</sup> In his Phi Beta Kappa address at Columbia University, June, 1906.

<sup>2</sup> Classical Conference, Ann Arbor, Mich., March, 1906, *School Review*, June, 1906.

Studied with the aim to attain power in the language, interpretation becomes the goal. A student trained to read his Greek passage in the Greek with expression, responsive to the thought, out-classes the translator. He becomes an interpreter. Concentration has been always at its best. His mental discipline has been of the finest quality, and he is in a position to make Greek serve him at first hand in all lines of thoughtful endeavor.

The writer ventures to suggest the following change in the curriculum. Due to a wide-spread feeling that there is not time for two ancient languages, Latin is given the preference. Without raising the question of the relative merits of the two languages, would it not be an equitable adjustment to give students their choice to take Greek or to take Latin, and let those who choose Greek leave out the Latin? This would give those who take Greek time enough to study it to advantage. If afterward they may wish to take up Latin, they will have the advantage of their Greek, and will come to the Latin in the historical order.

These are some of the correctives in the interest of Greek. The constructive endeavor, really the one of chief importance, is concerned with the public. The influences adverse to Greek are at work among the people at large. The influences themselves wherever present will be permanent in their hostility to Greek, as they are to education in general; but the public is not to be so considered. The public is open to enlightenment. It contains many intelligent, earnest minds aspiring to the best things. To these the Greek may and ought to address himself. It is wrong to assume that Greek has nothing for them, and that they have no desire for Greek. In standing for the education of the spirit, the Greek teacher has a mission. Shall we be true to this mission?

Greek has yet to meet its Marathon. The Athenians will not send earth and water. Though Sparta may be tardy and the prophets at Delphi may waver; though the Acropolis is profaned by the feet of the invader; there is Salamis; and out of it all will rise the Parthenon, the Lyceum with its Aristotles, and the Academy with its Platos. In those days Greek will receive its own in art, in science, in philosophy.